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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER.

I propose this evening to make some remarks on the Lord's Prayer. You will find it recorded in the sixth chapter of Matthew, and the ninth verse, and onward; and in the eleventh chapter of Luke, beginning with the first verse. They only, of the four Evangelists, make mention of this prayer. And there is some difference between the account given of it by Luke, and that given of it by Matthew.

We find it embodied in the Gospel of Matthew with the Sermon on the Mount, having its organic relations to that memorable discourse, and seeming to spring necessarily out of the circumstances under which the Sermon took place. Any one who reads the Sermon on the Mount will find that the Lord's Prayer occupies just the place that was needed for the completion of the whole discourse. And yet, Luke speaks of it as if it were delivered on another occasion. This has given rise to the impression that, perhaps, it was delivered twice. And yet, if it was delivered twice, it is very singular that Mark, the most accurate, perhaps, of the four Evangelists, and John, the most devout, should both of them have omitted it. The words of Luke are,

"And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

In Matthew's version, you will find that there is the Doxology appended. It is the familiar Jewish Doxology:

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

This is unquestionably a later edition. The familiar and ordinary Jewish Doxology was added to the text, and the earliest editions omitted it. The best scholars now agree, therefore, that the form in Matthew is purer than the form in Luke. That is to say, that it is fuller, since it contains this addition, which the form in Luke does not.

You will perceive that Luke's account of this prayer is not inconsistent with its being a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was

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returning from one of those Galilean circuits of which he made so many ; and coming in sight of the sea of Galilee he stopped to feed the vast multitude which had followed him, or come forth to meet him. It is recorded that he withdrew from them, and went up into the mountains, and spent the night in prayer. He came down from the mountain in the morning, apparently, and met his disciples—his nearest, chosen disciples—had some converse with them, and then went down to the multitude. It is probable that he began his discourse there. But such was the throng, that he retired still further up ; and there he delivered the discourse.

This reconciles the two statements—one of which says that he delivered this sermon on a plain (apparently an immense level plain) ; and the other of which declares that he delivered it upon a mountain (for that term *mountain* was used to signify an upland, and not what we mean when we use it.)

It seems that our Master, after spending the whole night in prayer, ascended, and began his Sermon on the Mount. And when you read that Jesus taught men to pray in the midst of this sermon, you must not allow yourself to be misled by the term *sermon*. You must not think of a church, of a minister, of a text, and of a regular discourse such as you are accustomed to associate with this word. The Sermon on the Mount was no such thing. There can be no question that it was delivered in the most familiar way, and that he was sometimes standing and sometimes sitting—for both terms are employed to designate the method. And there is no doubt that it was interlocutory—that he discussed a certain point, and then received questions upon it which he answered. Although none of these questions are reported, the discourse itself bears marks, if I may so say, which indicate them. Topics are introduced and terminated in a way which shows that there were some sort of intervals. Though they are not locked one into another, there were stops, evidently ; and it is not improbable that he was interrogated in the midst of his discourses, and that after he had replied he went on. It is not unreasonable to suppose that thus he went from point to point. It is recorded that one said to him,

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

and we may believe that this took place during the progress of the Sermon on the Mount.

We are not, then, necessarily driven to the supposition that this prayer was twice delivered—once during the Sermon on the Mount, and once when he was asked to teach his disciples how to pray, as John taught his. This latter account is perfectly consistent with the former ; and it is probable that the circumstance recorded

by Luke took place when he was delivering the Sermon on the Mount.

Another question of some interest arises—namely, Was this Lord's Prayer original with our Master, or was it but a collection of the best Rabbinic prayers, or the best prayers of the Jewish people aforetime? This question is important only because the most modern spirit puts undue emphasis upon originality. It is the things which are original that call forth our highest approbation. Ah, what an original sermon! What an original letter! What an original book! Where one has been wearied by repetition, an original thing is very refreshing. But we are in danger of over-estimating originality, and making mere freshness or first delivery more important than the intrinsic quality of the thing delivered.

This leads us to state that probably almost every petition in the Lord's Prayer, although not to be found in precise terms, might have been found in sentiment among the best Jewish writings during or preceding, his day. I do not affirm that they were found; I merely say that so far as the value of the Prayer is concerned, and so far as the honor of the Saviour is concerned, I would just as lief as not that you would find every one of them in the Old Testament.

It is not in the originality of the Sermon on the Mount that its beauty, or power, or importance, or value consist. Nearly every single sentence of the Beatitudes I can show you, in almost the same words, in the Prophets and the Psalms; and the sentiments are contained there over and over again. "Blessed are the poor"; "Blessed are they that mourn"; "Blessed are the peacemakers"; "Blessed are the meek"—these declarations were made before Christ uttered them, if not in precise phraseology, yet in sentiment. And why should we hesitate to believe that among such a people, educated specially by the divine Providence, under the guidance of the Lord Jehovah, where so many prayers had been made, where prayers were so universal, and where they were so necessary to the right condition of men—why should we hesitate to believe that among such a people, and under such circumstances, these petitions of the Lord's Prayer were offered ten thousand times? Why should we suppose that they were first uttered when Christ delivered the Sermon on the Mount? I have no question that the substance of that Prayer, although it had not existed in the same form, or in the same phraseology in which Christ presented it, had been known and employed by thousands of souls.

It is therefore no reproach, and it takes nothing from the value of the Lord's Prayer, nor from this whole discourse, to say that they

were not original with Christ; that they were not then first invented when he gave them to his disciples. We know it was so in respect to the discourse at large.

Most excellent men have called the Sermon on the Mount a *charter of Christianity*. There could be nothing more unfortunate than that term. It was not prospective; or, it was so only to a secondary extent. It was retrospective. It was a distinct summing up of the vast knowledge that had accrued to God's people up to that time, and a giving them the highest spiritual instruction. It was expressly designed to bring together what men had already learned, that from that, as a starting-point, the new dispensation and the new life might *go on* developing. And the key-note was given in these two sentences:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

We find, therefore, that the Sermon on the Mount, of which so much is said, as being a sufficient foundation of Christianity, was not original, so far as the matter of which it was composed is concerned. It simply grouped and gathered together all those elements of truth which had already been disclosed. The Sermon on the Mount had not one single sentence about faith: is there no faith in Christianity? It had not a single word about Christ, or a Redeemer: is there no Redeemer in Christianity? It had not a syllable on the subject of death or immortality: is there no death nor immortality in Christiany? It had nothing of future punishment or reward: is there nothing of these in Christianity? Can that be all of Christianity which has no teaching of an eternal world, nor of an atoning Saviour? The Sermon on the Mount was in some respects a true exposition of Christianity, or of a part of it—that part which had been derived from the Jewish church. Gathering together in that matchless discourse the best things which had been brought to light, he said, as it were, "Take these, now, into the spiritual life. Let them contribute to your highest development. Adopt this Prayer as yours. When it is claimed as Jewish, I give it to the Jews; it was not original with your Jesus; but it was inspired by Jehovah, although it came through the old dispensation; and it is just as good for your purpose as though it had been first uttered by me."

Nothing is taken from it, to prove that it was in existence before Christ's time. The beauty and power of it do not depend upon its being shown to have been first thought of when the Saviour announced it to his disciples. It is the combination of the elements of

which it is composed, and their incorporation into a higher spiritual life, that makes them beautiful and powerful.

Another question arises, namely, Was this Prayer of our Saviour a model and suggestion of prayer, or was it a form to be used liturgically? I hold it to have been a suggestion. There is no objection to using it as a form liturgically; but there is no evidence (and much to the contrary) that our Saviour designed that the disciples should take this Prayer, and repeat it word for word, liturgically. If he had so designed, the variations of phraseology in Luke and Matthew would be unaccountable and inexplicable. More than this, if it was to be a set form, and obligatory, how does it happen that there is no further allusion to it in the New Testament? The Saviour never referred to it except on this one occasion. There was no reference made to it by the apostles in their instruction to the churches. Christian churches existed for more than fifty years without a written Gospel; and there is no hint that, by tradition or otherwise, it was made imperative on Christians to repeat the Lord's Prayer in the form in which it stands. It was three hundred years before it began to take on that form, which afterward became a superstition until the *Pater Noster* degenerated almost into contempt. The repetition of it, once, twice, thrice, a hundred times, was supposed to have some virtue. The counting the beads, and saying the Lord's Prayer at every one of them, thus multiplying the mere "vain repetitions" by scores and hundreds, was prescribed, and was supposed to have some inherent benefit in it. This shows how degenerate the Christian heart and imagination had become.

That we are permitted to repeat the Lord's Prayer as a part of a liturgy, I need not argue; but the question as to the wisdom of formulated prayer, as to whether it is better that a prayer should be prescribed, and followed in sequence, and in the same terms always, is involved; and about that I have only to say, that they who find that they can pray better out of the Book have God's dear leave to pray out of the Book. That road in which your feet ascend easiest and fastest toward the heavenly gate is your road; and you need no priest, no minister, no authority, to tell you to walk in it. If you can pray more to edification by the formulated prayers of the church than by extemporaneous prayers, so pray. It is not for me to cast any aspersion upon them. Nor is it for you to turn upon me and say that extemporaneous prayers are indecent and unedifying. You have a right to say that they do not edify you, but not to say that they do not edify me and other people.

It seems unnecessary that there should be a perpetual jar and

collision between the two schools, one of whom write their prayers and then read them, and the other of whom speak out of their soul extemporaneously.

In regard to public service, there is this to be said: that where men have the gift of prayer, it would seem far more edifying that one should pray out of his heart and experience and judgment, and out of his knowledge of the want of the community to which he ministers. On the other hand, where men have not the gift of prayer, where their extemporaneous prayers are dry and useless, one naturally longs for the stately grandeur of the prayers of the Book, —for, if we speak of written prayers, of course we think of those in the dear old Episcopal Prayer-book—the book of our fathers. Although I was not brought up in the Episcopal Church, that church to me is full of venerableness. And indeed, I am filled with gratitude to it for the great service which it has done to Christianity through so many ages. Therefore it seems to me that there is a common ground. Let those use the Book who find the most edification in it; and let those who find their gifts leading them outside of the Book have their liberty. Bear with each other, and rejoice each in the other's gifts and liberties.

In private prayer, however, it seems to me preëminently desirable that men should not lean on the crutches of the book; that every one in his own household, and especially in his closet, should learn, if he has not learned already, to commune with God as one speaks to another, face to face. I am far more clear and decided on this point than I am upon the other.

With these preliminaries, let us analyze a little the contents of the Lord's Prayer. We will take it as it is recorded in Matthew:

"After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven."

Here you have the standpoint. We are to come to God, not as the subjects of a monarch. Still less are we to come before God as abject servants. And certainly we are not to come into the presence of God as slaves come trembling into the presence of their despot. The very opening of the prayer places us in a filial relation to God. One might say that no man prays well the Prayer of the Lord whose heart does not first cry out, "My Father!" It is the call of the soul to its dearest and best heavenly Friend; and no man who is merely reverential can pray this Prayer. Bow down the head till it touches the ground. Let the heart be weighed down with awe and veneration that does not enable the lip to speak a word aright. It is not what breaks us down before God that fits us to go into his presence. It is that which lifts us up toward him. It is our yearning

for him, our realization of his true paternity, and our corresponding filial affection toward him, which give us liberty to say the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer. It is a sentence that casts its light far back into the old dispensation, and also far forward into the new dispensation. For, whatever you may find in the Old Testament, you will not find much there that would lead men to approach Jehovah as a father. There is a recognition of fatherhood there; but it was not the manner and habit of the people of Israel so to approach their God. It is distinctively Christian in this respect, that it is made to be the genius of Christianity. We are not to go to a crowned monarch. We are not to take our conception of God's code from the codes of civil rulers. We are to lift up, in our imagination and in our affection, the dearest and purest and most loving household. That is the divine ideal of government, as prefigured in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we draw near to God, therefore, we draw near saying, in the very first sentence, "Our Father." And with that word, what may we not petition for? What may not the child say in the ear of his parent? What confidence is more utter than that which exists between the parent and the child that loves and is loved at home? What is there that the child may not ask of the father; or, what confidence is there that he may not repose in the father? If the child has gone wrong, how easy it is for him to ask forgiveness of the father? Or if the child desires to take on privilege, what is there that he is ashamed or unwilling to ask of his father? For all that the father has is for the children. And although in the household there is a distinction of rights and properties, yet, in proportion as love prevails this distinction is hidden, and other relationships appear; and all who are in the house feel that each is a member of the other, and that they have all things in common. So, whatever there is of beauty, and of good, and of privilege, and of permission, the child freely asks of the father in the household.

This same thing is implied in the very first sentence with which, in the Christian life, we address our God. We are permitted to disarm him of all the terrors which hover around the fate-gods of antiquity; to drop off the magisterial relations which have been associated with him; to no longer see him sitting enthroned with severity on his brow, with justice in his eye, with the implements of power in his hand, and with the circumstance of administration around about him; but to see him sitting as One to whom we may draw near with associations of loving tenderness. And we say, "Our Father." And with that word fear flies, and doubts disappear, and the heart rests.

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

He is not weak or impoverished, as earthly parents are. He is not down on the level of our ignorance. He is not, like us, rolled over the banks of obscure mist and fog. He is lifted above the weakness of life into the immortality and strength and purity and beauty of the heavenly land. He is the glorious Father of an eternal sphere.

"Our Father, which art in heaven."

The little child lisps it. These precious words are among the earliest that we learn to utter. The child hears the parents devoutly utter them, and his thought passes from the lower parentage, taking the hint and suggestion of the father and mother to lift before itself the higher fatherhood. This is the most blessed conception the child can take of God, and the greater love of heaven, and the better household.

"Hallowed be thy name."

Once brought into the divine presence, the soul's first outburst is such as an absent child speaks. Do you know what it is to be homesick? Were you ever sent away from home when small, as I was? Do you remember what it was to remain and count the weeks and days and hours? Do you recollect how you could not sleep the night before you were to start for home; and how you could not eat your breakfast; how when the stage was waiting for you the excitement took away all your appetite; and how as you rolled over the journey you thought you would surprise the family when you got home; how, when at last you got there, you thought of some little device by which you would take them by surprise, but how, when you rushed into the house, all you could do was to throw your arms about your mother's neck, and cry, and say, "Oh! dear mother!"

That is the generous way in which the child's heart pours itself out. This is an illustration of the current, the gush, the enthusiasm, of that love which children feel. The child's love goes out to meet the parent's love, as the most beautiful, the dearest, the most sacred, the most holy thing; and for the moment love worships love.

This I suppose to be the interpretation of *Hallowed be thy name.* As it were, the soul opens its arms, and throws them around the Father in heaven, and says, "O Lord and Father! sacred and holy be thy name." It is the impulse of one who wants the Father to be most beloved, glorious, beautiful, and sacred, not only to himself, but to all.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

These petitions are one. The Kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, of joy, of peace. The law of God is that which produces order, truth, equity, and so love, peace, good-will; and these petitions come

from the aspirations of the heart for that more perfect state, in itself and throughout the universe, in which God himself dwells. It is as if the child saw how beautiful was the palace of his Father God, and longed that the same beautiful and blessed estate should be universal, and that it should be to others, as to him, that kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That is the law of joy in all the universal realm.

Thus far the Prayer respects things beyond our own personal interest. Now we are permitted, as it were, to make mention of our private want.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

This is a recognition of divine providence. It is a recognition of that care for our sustenance which in the fatherly government of God is continually going on.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

You will never know what that means, probably. Where it was first uttered, in a majority of the instances of those that heard it, it was a question, every day, where they were to get the sustenance of that day. They lived within a handbreadth of starvation. They had no stores. They had laid up nothing in advance. They had no wealth. Their food, at best, was but a handful of grain. It was very slender compared with our table bounties. They lived all the time in intimacy with famine. And when Christ taught them to say to God,

"Give us this day our daily bread,"

he touched a chord that was always vibrating in their hearts. By faith, it brought them, in respect to the want which nature presses most closely upon men, into direct connection with the sovereign providence of God in the affairs of this world. It reminds one of that other passage, where our Saviour said,

"Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

This is not inconsistent with the petition,

"Give us this day our daily bread."

It is not a prayer of anxiety. It is a prayer of confidence in the divine providence of God and recognition of it.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Here the heart recognizes its own inferiority and imperfection and sinfulness. It also recognizes, when it asks forgiveness, that it is itself in a forgiving mood.

"And lead us not into temptation."

Suffer us not to be led into temptation, is the meaning of that passage. No man knows what he will do when he is tempted, nor what he will undo.

"But deliver us from evil.'

Now, although this prayer is so simple, yet when we come to look into these various petitions, I think we shall see that scarcely anything can be asked in this world that may not be appropriately gathered under one or other of these various heads. There is no extent of experience, and no want, that may not properly be considered as but an enlargement of one or other of these petitions. This is more nearly, therefore, a universal prayer, than any other prayer that was ever framed. It is among the shortest, and yet among the most comprehensive and suggestive.

There is infinite latitude allowed under it. We are not to shut ourselves up simply to the repetition of these phrases.

Our view of the communion of the soul with God; that fellowship which we have with God; the interchange of thought and sympathy which the refined Christian heart loves to take with God—all these come appropriately under that head. All the desires of a man for worldly good may appropriately be brought under the head, *Give us this day our daily bread.* All the fears men have, come in under the head, *Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from evil.* All the things that you need for yourself, or for your children, traced back, are found, in their initial forms, in this Lord's Prayer. This is a birthright prayer, belonging to every man. A gate, it is, through which every living soul may pass. Each petition is a separate gate. And beyond is an infinite variety of blessed things. These gates open, as it were, into a garden where are growing fruits and flowers in wonderful profusion. Endless diversities of things are there; and all of them are appropriate to the utterance of this prayer.

Are we to repeat it in the form in which it was given, and in that form only? The Saviour says that we are to pray *after this manner.* His words were, not, *This prayer pray ye,* but, *After this manner pray ye.*

Who may pray it? Every one. May the pirate pray it, on his bloody deck? If he can, he may. May the murderer pray it, while the noose is yet swinging and waiting for his neck? If he desires to, he may. May the reeling debauchee, returning from his night's excess, and wearied and jaded and depressed, pray it? If he has a heart to, he may. May the man who has been overcome again and again and again by the temptation of the world, who still is standing in the presence of his conqueror (the sin that doth so easily beset him), and who is ashamed that he is so often carried away—may he, with a full consciousness of his wickedness and insincerity, and broken promises, and worthless life, and sinful heart, pray? If

he desires to, he may. May a man before he is converted call God Father? There is only one condition that stands between you and your calling God Father, and that is, that, being a sinner, you have not a real desire to be released from your sins. If you love sin, if you love wickedness, and you use the Lord's prayer to parry judgments with, then I forewarn you. Let it alone. Touch it not. But the mere circumstance of being a sinner does not disqualify one from praying to God. Is not the sacrifice of the wicked an abomination to God? Yes. If a man tries to garnish his wickedness by sacrifice, and he thinks sacrifice is an atonement for that wickedness, and that after sacrifice he may go on with plenary indulgence again, then it is an abomination to God. But to interpret it so that a man may not pray until he is converted, is to shut out the universe. If God made provision for wicked men, who are they that may not find succor and help by praying to him? May not my son, who, little by little, has been weakened, and has gone down, step by step, and has fallen into the nets of gamblers and drinkers, and has come to poverty, and through years and years of degradation has separated himself from me, until sickness overtakes him—when then, in his wretchedness, he has fevered dreams of his home, and of *me*, may he not call out, "O, my father"? May he not invoke his mother until he has been restored to health, and to his right mind, and until he comes back to his father's house as good as he went away? May he not, in his low and suffering condition, ask help and pity of his father and mother? When does your heart most need the healing of another heart, but when it is wickedest and worst? In that infirmity which sin brings; in that prostration of moral power which tends to wrong-doing—there is where a man most needs God's pity and God's mercy. Is that the time that a man's mouth shall be shut, and he shall not say, "O God, my Father, help me"? Is prayer the privilege of Christians, and not the privilege of men who are not Christians? Is it the privilege of those who have been brought into the light of faith, and not the privilege of those who have not made proof of faith, and are afar off from it?

Wherever there is a man who feels the sting of sin, and would have release, he has a right to say, "O, Father, help me!" Wherever there is a man who is conscious that he has done wrong again and again and again, and that in his own strength he never can stand, and that he needs help, he has a right to ask for it. "I am lost in sin; I have no strength to rescue myself; thou art God; save me!"—that is an argument which knocks louder at the bosom of God than any battle-ax at the gate of any castle on earth.

If any man feels that he is so weak that he cannot sustain him-

self, there is strength for him if he will ask it; and he has a right to ask it, though his name is on no church book. And though men condemn you, God forgives you. If your father and mother forget you, the Lord will take you up. If your friends and neighbors cast you off, God will not forsake you. So long as you have life, so long as you know enough to want to be better than you are, no matter what your antecedents have been, you have a right to go to God, and say, "Our Father."

This prayer, with its hope and cheer, and with its associations, must at times come most bitterly to many and many a wanderer. Ye that have been across the deep; ye that in foreign lands have left behind you, not only the form of your parents, but almost every memory of them; ye that have forsaken the paths of belief, and have grown worldly, and become hoary in worldliness, and have forgotten the God of your father and mother, are there not times when, as you behold little children kneeling before their mother, with innocent face and upturned eyes, and learning to repeat, with broken language, and sweet simplicity, this Prayer—are there not such times when a chord of memory is struck in your hearts? How different were you when you knelt at your mother's knee and repeated that Prayer! Do you not remember it? And in the old, brown house, over which the elms used to swing their branches, storm-tossed, do you not remember how you repeated unwittingly these strange sentences, looking askance here and there in an unconscious, half roguery? Do you not remember the evening song! Do you not remember the parting kiss as you retired to rest? And in the night, when some fear seized you, do you not remember the hasty presence of your watching mother? She is dead. She died in the faith of the Saviour. She has gone home. It may be that she has been your guardian angel. You have gone far from her precepts. You have forsaken the guide of your youth. You have become hard-hearted and worldly-minded. Oh, sadly wandering man! does not the thought of your childhood sometimes come back to you with overpowering freshness? At times you used to recite with unwonted fervor this matchless prayer of the Saviour, given for all mankind, and for you. It once was familiar to you. And does it not draw you back with powerful memories and associations to the blessed and innocent days of your youth? When you think of what you were, and what you meant to be, and what you are, does it never give a pang to your heart, and do you not wish that you could now be of the same faith and the same hope that your parents were? Do you not wish that you were joined with them, in simplicity, in purity, and in fervent piety, to God?

And are there not some prayerless souls here to-night who will be tempted to come back? Are there not some of you who, though you have not taken the name of God upon your lips for years, except for profane purposes, will go down on your knees before you sleep, and repeat once more, solemnly, tenderly, yearningly, the Lord's Prayer? And then, when the morrow comes, I beg you to pray, "Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me this day from evil." And gently, even by so small a thing as this, you may be led, step by step, until the whole way of prayer shall become familiar to your feet. And then, when life departs, no longer afar off, not knowing what to pray for as you ought, you shall stand and see your God face to face, and find that his fatherhood is sweeter, and larger, and more real and rich than it has entered into the heart of man to conceive.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night. O thou that changest not, that art the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, under thy wings we would put ourselves and be secure. How feeble is our strength! How are we crushed as before the moth! How is our wisdom but as the twilight! How often are our desires, at their best estate, leading us to destruction! How are our plans brought to desolation as in a moment. We look out upon life and see how generations come and thrive, and pass, and perish, that others may make the long and repeated experiment of ignorance, and weakness, and temptation, and sin, and sorrow, and sighing, and death. And still creation travails, burdened, groaning in pain until now. O thou Deliverer! when wilt thou appear? When shall come the new heaven and the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness? When shall men be lifted up from their degradation? It is not enough that we are born into happiness and secure. Are not all races our fellows, and our brethren? How can we be content that the decrees of God's mercy are fulfilled toward us, when we look out upon the uncounted millions of men that have no God but idols, no knowledge but of things degrading, and no hope but in things base and low? O thou that art the Father of man, what hast thou done for thine household upon earth? How are thy children scattered to the uttermost portions thereof! Thou hast promised to redeem the world; hast thou forgotten to be gracious? Thou hast promised that yet the whole earth shall see thy salvation; where is the blessed age in which there shall be this fulfillment? We beseech of thee that thou wilt strengthen our faith. Our hope is in thee. Heaven is the strength and the wisdom of the human; and little do we derive of comfort, or courage, or hope from the sight of our eyes. Thou, in thine infinite resources of power, art strong; but stronger art thou in thy love and sympathy. Thou art stronger than the ages, or than all the races of men. And we believe in thee, though we cannot believe in the things which we look upon,

nor solve the natures that are in them, nor reconcile the thousand doubts that come to afflict us. We believe in thee, in thy wisdom, in thy government, in thy power to subdue all things to thyself, and in the final glory of thine administration, when thou shalt acquit thyself before all creatures, and rise triumphant over the conflicts of ages, and morality shall prevail, and joy and happiness fill up the measure that now sorrow and sighing fill.

O Lord, our God, come quickly. The whole earth doth wait for thee. We are glad for so many as have escaped from off the face of the earth. Their faces are seen here no more; but their voices are heard in heaven, and their blessed hearts are there, and there their joys abound. In that great household where none are lost, we have our little children. They are angel-attended. They walk forth radiant in thy realm of light and beauty. Those that once bore sin, and sorrow, and temptation with us are now gone to heaven. The hands that taught our hands are there. The hearts from whom our hearts learned to love are with thee. A great company, a growing church, every day increasing, there is on high, of those who have been our companions on the earth. Grant that we may have patience to wait until our time comes; until we are permitted to come out of the winter into the daylight, the noon-day glory, of the sunless land.

O Lord our God, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that we may take courage from the victories of those who have gone before, and hold on a little longer in the midst of trials, and under temptations. When our faith fails, may we still have the light of thy countenance, and the joy of thy salvation.

And now, wilt thou grant, we beseech of thee, thy blessing to-night upon all waiting souls in thy presence. Listen to the heart's aspirations of prayer. Hear all those who make their complaints before thee. Hear all that mourn. Be near to all that pray. Regard the petitions which they most need to have answered, rather than those which they most vehemently urge. By thy wisdom overrule their wisdom. We pray that thy will may be done, and not our own. Guide us so long as we shall live. And when, at last, we come to the valley, of the shadow of death, may they that look down into it, when their sight fails to follow us, hear our voices rejoicing as we go forward, victorious, up on the other side. And then we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word spoken; and grant that it may rest on many hearts as the dew rests upon the flower, or as the rain falls upon the ground. We beseech of thee that thou wilt fructify thy word. Make it bring forth a hundred-fold. Deliver us, we pray thee, from lives that have in them no prayer. Deliver us from hearts that do not desire God. May our weak and spent hearts be strengthened, and refilled from the bounty and grandeur of thine. Lead *us* not into temptation. Deliver *us* from evil. And so, O Lord, we pray that in *our* hearts thy kingdom may come, and that in *our* lives thy will may be done. Our Father, take care of us in this life, and bring us to the other. And to thy name shall be the praise and the glory. *Amen.*

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